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TAGS: [PREL](#) [ECON](#) [FR](#) [AF](#)
SUBJECT: FM KOUCHNER'S TRIP TO AFGHANISTAN

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor, Josiah Rosenblatt, for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary. The main goals of FM Kouchner's April 11-12 visit to Afghanistan were to advance preparations for the upcoming Afghanistan support conference, scheduled for June 12 in Paris, and to intensify contacts with Afghanistan's regional neighbors. The trip was also designed to showcase French civil and military support for Afghanistan's reconstruction efforts, as highlighted by Kouchner's visits to French and Canadian troops and to a local maternity hospital. This was expected to be Kouchner's last visit to the region before the June conference. End summary.

¶2. (C) On April 15, poloff discussed FM Bernard Kouchner's April 11-12 visit to Afghanistan with Isabelle Dumont, the Advisor who accompanied him on the trip. (NOTE: Isabelle Dumont is normally Kouchner's Advisor for CIS and the Balkans; however, as Kouchner's Afghanistan leg was added to his Central Asia visit to Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, Isabelle was the accompanying staffer). According to Dumont, the main objective of the visit was for Kouchner to meet with Afghanistan's leadership to gauge their support for the upcoming conference on June 12. This support was strongly confirmed by President Karzai, the President of the Afghan Parliament and the Foreign Minister, all of whom expressed their gratitude and a willingness to work together with the French government to assure a successful conference. Karzai is reportedly less comfortable with the French-proposed NGO-component leading up to the conference, but understood Kouchner's points and will not block this initiative.

¶3. (C) The military aspect of the trip was showcased when Kouchner met up with his Canadian counterpart in Kandahar where they jointly greeted French and Canadian troops deployed there. Kouchner also visited a Canadian Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) and was introduced to the local police chief in Kandahar. In Kabul he made a special visit to a maternity hospital sponsored by French charities. All of the above were designed to underline France's commitment to long-term engagement in the reconstruction effort in Afghanistan.

¶4. (C) Dumont added that Kouchner came away from the trip with a strong commitment to working with Afghanistan's neighbors in the region, understanding that a narrow focus on Afghanistan alone would not resolve many of their thorniest issues (such as battling the counter-insurgency, the fight against drug trafficking, etc). In particular, the porous border with Pakistan presents a major challenge that the Afghan government and international community must try to address with both Afghanistan and Pakistan. Dumont expected that FM Kouchner would continue to emphasize this "regional vision" in France's policy objectives for Afghanistan, building on increased ties in Central Asia through the EU's Central Asia policy framework.

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